

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Water Resources Division
Water Rights Bureau

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

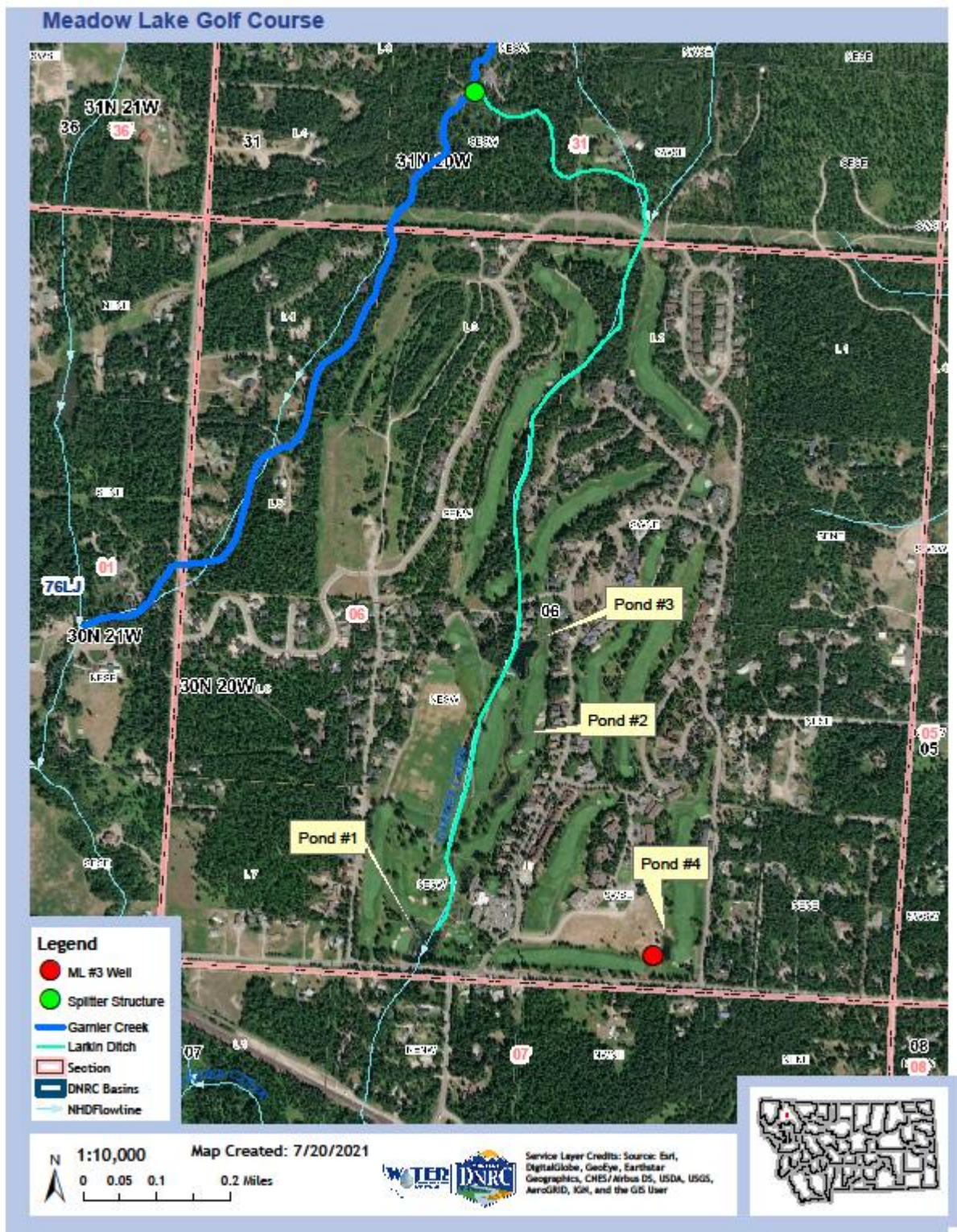
Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. Applicant/Contact name and address: Meadow Lake Investments LLC
755 Texas Ave
Whitefish, MT 59937
- 2.
3. Type of action: Application to Change an Irrigation Water Right 76LJ 30150982
4. Water source name: Groundwater (Deep Aquifer)
5. Location affected by project: W2E2, E2W2 Section 6, Township 30N, Range 20W, Flathead County
6. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:

The Applicant is proposing to change the place of use, add a commercial use, and add four places of storage for water use at the Meadow Lake Golf Course. The proposed change in place of use will expand the irrigation place of use from the original 40.5 acre footprint of the water right to the 114.4 acre irrigated footprint of the golf course. The proposed change in purpose is to add commercial (water hazard) use to the water right. The location of the water hazards will be places of use for the commercial use and also added as places of storage. Under the Applicant's proposal, up to 148.5 AF will be used for irrigation of 114.4 acres of turf grass at the golf course, and up to 36.4 AF will be used for commercial (water hazard) use. The maximum annual diverted amount of these uses will not exceed 145.9 AF so as to not exceed the historical consumed volume of the right. The period of diversion and use for irrigation and commercial use will be May 1-September 30.

The DNRC shall issue a change authorization if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-402 MCA are met.

7. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks (DFWP)
Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
Montana Natural Heritage Program
National Wetlands Inventory
USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey



Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Water quantity - Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.

Determination: No significant impact

The source of supply is Garnier Creek which has not been identified as chronically or periodically dewatered by DFWP. The Applicant is proposing to change how they use water diverted from Garnier Creek but will not increase the total amount used or consumed.

Water quality - Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.

Determination: No significant impact

Garnier Creek has not been assessed by DEQ. There should be no changes to Garnier Creek associated with this project; the Applicant is proposing to redistribute the water historically diverted, not divert any additional amount.

Groundwater - Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply. If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.

Determination: No significant impact

This application is for a surface water change.

DIVERSION WORKS - Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.

Determination: No significant impact

The means of diversion is a splitter structure that has existed in Garnier Creek for over 100 years according to information available to the Department. There is no proposal to change or modify the point of diversion so there will be no channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, dams, or riparian impacts to the surface water sources.

UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Endangered and threatened species - Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern," or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater,

assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or “species of special concern.”

Determination: No significant impact

The Montana Natural Heritage Program identified a list of 16 animal species of concern within the township and range that the project is in. Of this list, the Canada Lynx, Grizzly Bear, and Bull Trout are listed as “threatened” by the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Twelve plant species of special concern were identified by the Montana Natural Heritage Program to potentially be in the project area. Of this list, the Spalding’s Catchfly is listed as “threatened” by the US Fish & Wildlife Service. This project area is already developed as a golf course surrounded by residential development and it is not anticipated that any of the species of concern will be impacted by the proposed project.

Townsend’s Big-eared Bat	Wolverine	Hoary Bat	Canada Lynx	Little Brown Myotis
Fisher	Western Pygmy Shrew	Grizzly Bear	Great Blue Heron	Peregrine Falcon
Western Toad	Westslope Cutthroat Trout	Pygmy Whitefish	Bull Trout	Smoky Taildropper
A Cave Obligate Isopod	Meadow Horsetail	Whitebark Pine	English Sundew	Latah Tule Pea
Kalm’s Lobelia	Northern Buttercup	Spalding’s Catchfly	Sparrow’s-egg Lady’s Slipper	Slender Cottongrass
Short-beaked Aloe Moss	Black Golf Club Moss	Britton’s Dry Rock Moss		

Wetlands - *Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.*

Determination: No significant impact

A review of the National Wetlands Inventory does identify any natural wetlands within the project area.

Ponds - *For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.*

Determination: No significant impact

There were no natural ponds identified within the project area.

GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE - *Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.*

Determination: No significant impact

This proposed beneficial uses of this application are irrigation and commercial uses associated with golf course operation. It is not anticipated that these uses will have an impact on the soil quality, stability, or moisture content. No soil survey has been completed for the golf course property.

VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS - *Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.*

Determination: No significant impact

It is not anticipated that issuance of a change authorization will contribute to the spread of noxious weeds in the project area. It is the landowner's responsibility to prevent the spread of noxious weeds on their property. The area is already developed as a golf course and spread of noxious weeds would have negative impacts to the business.

AIR QUALITY - *Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.*

Determination: No significant impact

There will be no impacts to air quality associated with issuance of a mitigation change authorization.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES - *Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project if it is on State or Federal Lands. If it is not on State or Federal Lands simply state NA-project not located on State or Federal Lands.*

Determination: No significant impact

N/A- Project not located on State or Federal Lands.

DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY - *Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water and energy not already addressed.*

Determination: No other potential impacts have been identified.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS - *Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.*

Determination: No known environmental plans or goals will be impacted by this project.

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES - Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.

Determination: No access or recreational activities will be significantly impacted by this project.

HUMAN HEALTH - Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.

Determination: This proposed project will have no significant impact on human health.

PRIVATE PROPERTY - Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.

Yes___ No X If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.

Determination: No regulatory impacts are known.

OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.

Impacts on:

- (a) Cultural uniqueness and diversity? No significant impacts identified
- (b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? No significant impacts identified
- (c) Existing land uses? No significant impacts identified
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? No significant impacts identified
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? No significant impacts identified
- (f) Demands for government services? No significant impacts identified
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? No significant impacts identified
- (h) Utilities? No significant impacts identified
- (i) Transportation? No significant impacts identified
- (j) Safety? No significant impacts identified
- (k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? No significant impacts identified

2. *Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:*

Secondary Impacts No significant impacts identified

Cumulative Impacts No significant impacts identified

3. ***Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*** None
4. ***Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:***

The only alternative to the proposed action would be the no action alternative. The no action alternative would not allow the Applicant to change their water right to beneficially use surface water from Garnier Creek at the golf course.

PART III. Conclusion

1. ***Preferred Alternative***
Issue a change authorization if the Applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-402 MCA are met.
2. ***Comments and Responses***
None
3. ***Finding:***
Yes___ No X *Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?*

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

No significant impacts related to the proposed project have been identified.

Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:

Name: Nathaniel T. Ward

Title: Program Specialist-New Appropriations

Date: July 20, 2021